ready for burning, and generally cleaned up. The fire in the middle of the hut was rekindled to warm the mother and baby, and gruel was given to the mother of millet flour, brought from the mother-in-law's hut where it had been cooked. With the help of the other women, the mother washed her breasts with warm water and massaged them to make the milk flow, ready for the child to suck.

The other ethnic groups surrounding the Ngoni in Nyasaland considered it disastrous if a child was born face down or with the buttocks first, and twins were dreaded as ill omens. The Ngoni shared none of these beliefs and were particularly considerate for the mother of twins, often killing a beast to give the mother meat and broth to increase her flow of milk. The only notice the Ngoni took of the method of presentation at birth was that they gave a child a name indicative of such a birth. They gave special names for the first and second twin born. If one twin died it was buried under the veranda of the hut and a smooth stone was placed on top. This stone was used for sitting on, and the surviving twin was held on it when being washed.

Ritual and social uncleanness

From the time just before the birth took place the hut and everything in it, and the woman and her new baby, were considered ritually unclean. If she had to leave the hut to answer the call of nature, she covered herself with a cloth from head to foot and avoided meeting anyone. She did no cooking herself until the ritual uncleanness was removed. Food was brought to her from her mother-in-law's hut or from her co-wives' huts, a special dish was used and washed separately, and she did not use her hands to eat with but a wooden spoon which was also washed separately. During the period of seclusion within the hut one of the senior women who helped at the birth slept in the hut with the mother and baby. No other young children were allowed to sleep in the hut, though they might come in to see the baby. All males

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1960
FR5 Ngoni FR5

societies maintaining officially a conspiracy of silence, the stories were only standard replies by adults to children, and most adults admitted that children pursued these inquiries among themselves and found out what they wanted to know from each other.

Naming the child

After coming out of the hut and being presented to its male kin and to the elders of the village as 'the new stranger', the baby was given a name. The choice of a name was usually left to the baby's paternal grandfather. He sometimes gave it his name or his father's name, if a boy, or if a girl, his mother's name or his father's sister's name. There was no ceremony attached to naming. After the matter had been talked over by the men at the kraal gate, the grandfather came to the hut, and called the mother and child out and said, 'His name is so and so.' The personal name was seldom used in ordinary social intercourse, but in spite of this every child was given a personal name, and sometimes had added to it a descriptive name indicating that it had been born face downwards, or born a twin, or born too soon after the previous baby.

At this time of naming, the father, or more generally the paternal grandfather, prepared a 'carrying skin' for the mother to carry the baby in. It really belonged to the baby rather than to the mother, for it was used by the nurse girl to carry the baby, and she had the child in her charge most of the day. The skin was that of a goat or small calf from the herd owned by the house to which the baby's father belonged. The skin was cleaned and scraped and made soft by rubbing in fat, and handed over to the mother with some of the meat for broth, and the rest of the meat was eaten by the males of that house. The gift in time became a cloth and not a skin, as skins for wearing or household use went out of fashion. The cloth when presented however was still called a 'carrying skin' and a goat or a calf from the herd of the

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1960
FR5 Ngoni FR5

young wife, an Ngoni husband would not normally support her against his own mother. In the case of his child, who was born a member of his family, house and clan, his mother and her circle of senior women had uncontested sway.

The second features of Ngoni social organization which the 'arrival of a new stranger' demonstrated was the women's interest in and capacity for planning and organization. The senior women had no doubt about what steps to take and who should take them, from the time when labour began till after weaning. The preparations for the birth, the receiving of the child, the care of mother and baby after birth, the ritual cleansing of the hut, the presentation of the child to the public—all these acts up to and including weaning were planned with what seemed an elaborate organization when first observed, but which turned out to be standard Ngoni practice. Two particular aspects of this organization stood out as different from the local practices: the provision for artificial feeding of the child, and the role played by nurse girls and women helpers.

The main variants in this pattern arose from three causes: the effect of marriage with women of other ethnic groups who married into Ngoni families and had to accept the pattern of authority imposed by the house organization of Ngoni women. They therefore had to follow in its main lines the procedures we have described for the birth and care of infants. But Ngoni men and women deplored in particular two non-Ngoni elements which were creeping into the conduct of birth and post-natal ceremonies. One was the attitude taken during difficult labour when the women attending to the mother tried to force her to confess to illicit sexual relations which the non-Ngoni believed to be the cause of the delayed birth. The other was the prohibition on a wife putting salt in the food she was cooking while she was menstruating or at any other ritually unclean period. The true Ngoni despised this salt taboo and the women of Ngoni families did not practise it.

4: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949)1951 FR5 Ngoni FR5
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uniting a married couple are weak as compared with say, the Bemba.[32] The bride is anointed with gall, and carries the gall bladder in her hair back to her own village as a sign that she has been through the marriage ceremony and has been instructed in her wifely duties by her husband's kinsfolk and neighbours. But the husband himself is usually not there, 'that day is not his work', and I once saw a man quietly drinking on one side of the village while his bride was being anointed on the other. In general it is not until much later that husband and wife appear together in ceremonial situations. The personal association of husband and wife begins in darkness and the privacy of the hut. Later the wife will have validated her status as a married woman, and can appear as such in public alongside her husband without embarrassment.

It is when a woman is pregnant that her husband's actions are most liable to affect her mystically. In general a man may commit adultery and his wife has no case against him; but when she is pregnant he is under a moral obligation to sleep only with her and, if he is a polygynist, with his other wives. His adultery endangers her life, for it is believed that her labour will be difficult and she or the child may die. The pregnant woman is in mortal danger if she herself commits adultery and there is a common obligation of fidelity on both man and wife throughout pregnancy, accompanied in the eyes of some people by a positive obligation to copulate together so that the foetus may grow strong in the womb. When labour proves difficult, the midwife calls on the husband to confess the adulteries he committed while his wife was pregnant so that the child can be born. She may also tell the woman to confess.[33] If the child is born dead, the woman's relatives begin to suspect that the man confessed only some of his adulteries and concealed others, thereby killing the child. We have already noted that if the woman dies the husband must offer a beast to her kinsfolk (pp. 39f).

From the birth of the child until its umbilical cord has fallen off and it has been doctored, the husband should not sleep with anyone at all, not even with his other wives. He can resume sexual relations with them after the cord has fallen but he does not sleep with the mother of the child until about three months after the birth, when he has ritual intercourse with her and the child is again doctored. While the infant is sleeping the husband has *coitus interruptus* with its mother and allows his semen to fall on her thighs. She smears the semen over her thighs and then takes up the child and gives it to her husband, who rests it on his hips. After a moment he hands the infant back to his wife who also rests it on her hips. The child is then put back to sleep on the mat beside the couple. This ritual intercourse is obligatory in that if it is omitted it is believed the child

[32] Cf. Richards, op. cit., p. 113.
[33] Cf. Rattray, op. cit., p. 105, and H. F. Barnes, 'The birth of a Ngoni child', *Man*, xlix (1949), p. 89.

4: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949)195 FR5 Ngoni FR5
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602 that she intends to seek divorce if he does not reply. If the address
593 of the migrant labourer is unknown to his relatives or to his wife,
689 the court endeavours to trace him through the Administration.
692 Thus the husband's kin usually try to prove in court that the woman is seeking divorce because she has another husband in view, and sometimes imply that she has been committing adultery with him. I heard one man oppose the plea for divorce presented by the wife of an absent kinsman by saying that he was sure the woman had been committing adultery but that he had been unable to catch her in the act. Let the court postpone the case until he had good evidence and then he would agree to the plea. The husband's relatives are more certain of £3 damages if they can prove adultery, and the money is paid to them on behalf of the absent man. For her part the woman usually denies that she has any thought of remarriage. She arrives in court in her oldest and shabbiest clothes, to demonstrate both her husband's failure to clothe her and her own lack of desire to attract other men.

593 The general principle that no court action involving the husband's
684 sexual rights can be taken without his consent applies even to cases of incest. It may be well known that a woman is living incestuously with, say, her father, but the husband's relatives cannot take her to court without the permission of the husband. Many husbands, on hearing from their relatives that their wives are committing adultery or are pregnant by other men, prefer to let the matter stand over until their return to the village which may be several years hence. Thus one woman may have been sleeping with her father for many years, and another have a growing brood of adulterine children, before at last they are brought to court by their returned husbands.

578 Even when a man and his wife are both living in the towns, their
602 relatives may be called upon to settle differences between them. In one instance that came to my notice, a man and his wife both from the same village were living together in Lusaka. The woman
[845 had a still-birth and her husband went to a diviner to discover who
787 was responsible for this. He was told by the diviner that his wife
754] had been bewitched by his father's brother's son, who was also in Lusaka. The man wrote home to the village to complain. A meeting was held attended by important people in the village, and it was decided to write back and tell the two men that they must not be so foolish as to quarrel in this way. Not all men who go

167 away remain in such close touch with the village but there is a great
602 deal of correspondence back and forth, and this is augmented by the news brought by friends who come home. The intervention in a marital quarrel in the towns is one aspect of the way in which the field of social relations held in common by rural villagers stretches out to include kinsmen and former neighbours working many hundreds of miles away. Men who fall sick in Southern Rhodesia are fetched and escorted home, fathers go on holiday to visit their

6:Rattray E,G-5 (ca. 1900) 1907 FRS Ngoni FRS

will finish the ceremony [that the relish may be given out]. Should the girl, before she came to maturity, not have been betrothed to any man, the matrons tell her she must go to some lover; this is known as "chigango." In the evening she takes her cooking pot and relish and goes to the quarters of the young unmarried men, who for the night sleep somewhere else. In the morning the girl goes back to the *Kuku* hut.

V

THE BIRTH OF A CHILD

I. When a woman becomes pregnant, the matrons of the village tell the husband "he must now no longer cohabit with her." If the man have another wife he goes off to her house. When the time draws near for the woman's accouchement, she bids her husband leave her. He goes to one of the village matrons and tells her, "My wife is very ill." Then old women go to the hut and begin to take out all the cooking utensils and household goods. Should the woman have difficulty in giving birth the old women bid her confess, saying, "Speak, child, lest you die; who committed adultery with you?" Should she have been faithless she confesses, saying, "I sinned with so and so." The matrons hide such confessions. When she is safely delivered they bathe the infant, then one old woman goes off to tell the husband, "Your wife is well." Perhaps the woman has given birth to a male child, then she tells him, "You have seen a knobkerry."

13:Fraser M-5 (ca. 1890)1901
FR5 Ngoni FR5

787 [777] rising out of the lake, this was the spirit of the fathers returned. Now they had never heard before of men with white skins. But one day when they were burning the Henga villages, suddenly they came on David Livingstone and his party on their first journey of exploration on the Lake. More than once I have heard them tell how this wicked hag had cursed her enemy and said that beneath that tree the lightning would strike her, or some other terrible prediction, and there came a strange fulfilment. 796 741 Such curious accidents gave to witch-doctors and others a dangerous power over the people. And in spite of their constant failure to bring rain, or ward off sickness and death, their reputation was kept alive by the memory of one or two ancient successes, and by playing on the terrors of the people. Unfortunately these superstitious terrors led to miserable atrocities. 695 The witch-doctor was always called in to detect crime which was not patent. He brought his poison pot with him. He might accuse whom he pleased, and the only way the accused could clear himself was by drinking the poison. If he became sick and vomited then he was innocent. If he died he was guilty. When 766 a chief died his spirit was not allowed to go to the other world alone. A great fight was organised and many were killed, that they might be with him. Or the women and slaves were taken and buried alive with him in the pit.

845 849 The twin children and those who cut their upper teeth before their lower, or any who showed any abnormality were buried alive in the sand of the river, or were cast out to the hyenas.

177 These atrocities are happily becoming matters of history. We seldom now hear of them, and when we do, it sends a thrill of horror through many of the people.

[643] Now a great change is coming over the people. They are the only independent tribe in Central Africa, living under their own chiefs. But the old military days have passed away, and with them much of the great power of the chiefs. The old men see it, and shake their heads, but do nothing to readjust the state. But the young chiefs, most of whom are readers and Christians, have set themselves energetically to try and remould their government.

[634] Our most capable and powerful sub-chief, who is himself an elder of the church has recently established a regular hut tax, and has formed a police force. His police bring criminals to justice, enforce his judgments, prohibit the people from cutting down trees, and during slack seasons go through the villages, and where